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SUBJECT: CAPE TOWN MAYOR DISCUSSES LOCAL, NATIONAL AND  
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

1. (SBU) On December 12, Cape Town CG, Poloff and Polasst met with City of Cape Town Mayor and Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Helen Zille. Mayor Zille was enthusiastic about the strong gains the DA made in the recent by-elections, particularly in the Western Cape. She said that although the results were distorted since the African National Congress (ANC) did not fully participate in the Western Cape elections, the by-elections are an indication of the public's deep dissatisfaction with the ANC. She was especially pleased with the DA's gains in Kosovo, an exclusively Xhosa speaking community. DA support in this area went from 0.3 percent in the last election to 25 percent. Kosovo was identified early on by the Mayor's office as the area with the greatest needs. As Mayor, Zille led the way in providing electricity, infrastructure and healthcare for the community and regarded the area as a test case of what can be achieved by city and provincial leaders. She remained optimistic about the DA's future and growth and said she expected the party to win the Eastern Cape from the ANC with the help of coalition partners.

2. (SBU) On a national level, Zille is concerned about the actions of certain ANC leaders, particularly Vavi, Nzimande and Malema who are all closely linked to ANC President Jacob Zuma. Zille feels the ANC is losing its way and that it would resort to intimidation and cries of racism because they have used this tactic in the past. Zille also said that if Jacob Zuma becomes president the realignment of the political environment will happen a lot sooner and a coalition government would win the elections in 2014. Although Zille said the Western Cape election results would not be replicated nationally in 2009, she did say the DA would see some gains across South Africa and that the by-elections were the start of the DA's move towards being a governing party with growing support from South Africans of all races.

3. (SBU) When discussing the 2010 World Cup, Zille indicated the costs of the stadium and planning are a source of concern as the project is currently about R1 billion over budget. She said that plans were underway to get national government to step in and ease some of the financial burden, but this was still in the planning stages. She also expects the worldwide economic downturn to have an adverse effect on the 2010 preparations in the short term, but expects the economy to pick up by 2010. According to Zille's studies and projections, most 2010 visitors will come from Latin America and the United Kingdom. Latin America is relatively close to South Africa, approximately six hours by plane, which makes traveling to the 2010 events short and relatively cheap. Zille does not expect many visitors from the U.S. due its distance from South Africa.

4. (SBU) Zille also said recent taxi violence could disrupt the smooth operations of the World Cup. There are currently 150 taxi associations in Cape Town, all of whom mistrust each other and are deeply suspicious of any perceived benefits the other may receive. As a result there is little, if any, progress in negotiations between the various factions. The problem is having far reaching consequences as it is preventing investors from developing in and around Cape Town, a situation that will ultimately affect everyone as development leads to employment, infrastructure development and increased property values. Zille stated that one possible solution

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and try to re-establish order ahead of the 2010 World Cup.

15. (SBU) Upon reflecting on international events, Zille feels the election of President elect Obama is vitally important as an example of the victory of hard work and endurance. She said that Obama's achievement of overcoming poverty and working hard towards a target should serve as a reminder to all young people of what can be achieved when dedicated to a goal. She also feels that the U.S. needs to be more prudent when dealing with the economy, as there is a duty on capitalist economies to adhere to sound economic principles and not practice what she calls "casino economics." On the subject of Zimbabwe she believes the only way to solve the crises is for the United Nations to step in and take a firm stand on the issues. SADC has failed the people of Zimbabwe and proved to be utterly incapable of dealing with Mugabe. Zimbabwe has now reached a point where it is posing a danger to the stability, economies and health of the rest of the African continent and this can only be resolved with UN and international intervention.

16. (SBU) On a personal note, Zille talked about her future as Mayor of Cape Town and the leader of the DA. She said she has to make a decision whether to continue as Mayor, run for Premier of the province or assume the role as DA leader in Parliament. She is currently contemplating all these options and will make a decision once all the data has been collated. She, however, said that if it were a personal choice she would rather remain Mayor as this is where her heart is. She feels she can make a real difference at a local level and has seen the results of her work. Zille also noted there are still many challenges facing the city such as curbing land invasions, land restitution and providing adequate housing to impoverished communities.

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17. (SBU) Biographical note: Helen Zille began her career as a journalist on the Rand Daily Mail and in 1980 she went on an IV program to the U.S. She later became a political activist involved in various NGOs and organizations, including the Open Society Foundation, the Independent Media Diversity Trust, and the Black Sash. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Witwatersrand, and joined the former Democratic Party in the mid 1990s, where she was asked to reformulate the party's education policy and stand as a candidate on its election list for the Western Cape legislature. She also acted as Technical Adviser to the party at CODESA in the early 1990s. She was elected to the provincial parliament in the 1999 general election and appointed Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for education. She served as MEC under the newly formed Democratic Alliance until 2001, and then as leader of the opposition in the Provincial Legislature until she was elected to national parliament in 2004. As a member of parliament she stood on the Portfolio Committee on Education, and acted as the Democratic Alliance's National Spokesperson. In May 2006, Zille was elected mayor of Cape Town and in 2007, she was elected leader of the Democratic Alliance. Most recently she was awarded the honor of "World's Best Mayor." End note.